A GUIDE TO Church-Fellowship and Order.

According to the

Gospel-Institution:

WHEREIN

These following Particulars are distinctly handled:

I. The Necessity of Believers to joyn themselves in Church-Order.
II. The Subject Matter of the Church.
III. The Continuation of a Church-state, and of the Administration of Evangelical Ordinances of Worship, briefly vindicated.
IV. What sort of Churches the Disciples of Christ may, and ought to joyn themselves unto, as unto Entire Communion.

By the Late Pious and Learned Minister of the Gospel, John Owen, D. D.

John 5. 39. *Search the Scriptures*, &c.

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A

GUIDE

TO

Church-Fellowship and Order,

According to the

Gospel-Institution.

CHAP. I.

The Necessity of Believers to joyn themselves in Church-Order.

IT is the Duty of every Believer, of every Disciple of Christ, to *joyn himself*, for the due and orderly observation and performance of the Commands of Christ, unto the Glory of God, and their own Edification, *Matth.* 28. 18, 19, 20.

This in general is granted by all sorts and Parties of men; the grant of it, is the ground whereon they stand in the management of their *mutual sends in Religion*, pleading that men ought to be

of, or joyn themſelves unto this or that Church, ſtill ſuppoſing that it is their Duty to be of one or another.

Yea, it is granted alſo, that Perſons ought to *chuſe* what Churches they will joyn themſelves unto, wherein they may have the beſt advantage unto their Edification and Salvation. They are *to chuſe* to joyn themſelves unto that Church which is in all things moſt according to the mind of God.

This it is ſuppoſed is the Liberty and Duty of every Man; for if it be not ſo, it is the fooliſheſt thing in the World, for any to attempt to get others *from one Church unto another*; which is almoſt the whole buſineſs of Religion, that ſome think themſelves concerned to attend unto.

But yet notwithſtanding theſe Conceſſions, when things come to the trial in particular, there is very little granted in complyance with the Aſſertion laid down. For beſides that it is not a Church of Divine Inſtitution, that is intended in theſe Conceſſions, when it comes unto the iſſue, where a Man is born, and in what Church he is Baptized in his Infancy, there all *choice is prevented*, and in the Communion of that Church he is to abide, on the penalties of being eſteemed and

and dealt with as a *Schiſmatick*. In what *National Church* any perſon is baptized, in that *National Church* he is to continue, or anſwer the contrary at his peril. And in the *Precincts of what Pariſh* his Habitation falls to be, in that particular *Pariſh Church* is he bound to Communicate in all Ordinances of Worſhip. I ſay, in the judgment of many, whatever is pretended *of mens joyning themſelves unto the trueſt and pureſt Churches*, there is no Liberty of Judgment or Practice in either of theſe things left unto any of the Diſciples of Chriſt

Wherefore the *Liberty and Duty* propoſed, being the Foundation of all orderly *Evangelical Profeſſion*, and that wherein the Conſciences of Believers are greatly concerned, I ſhall lay down one Propoſition wherein 'tis aſſerted, in the ſence I intend, and then fully confirm it.

The Propoſition it ſelf is this:

It is the duty of every one who profeſſeth Faith in Chriſt Jeſus, and takes due care of his own Eternal Salvation, voluntarily and by his own choice to joyn himſelf unto ſome particular Congregation of Chriſts Inſtitution, for his own Spiritual Edification, and the right diſcharge of his Commands.

1. THIS Duty is preſcribed (1.) unto them only who *profeſs Faith in Chriſt Je-*

ſus, who own themſelves to be his Diſciples, that call Jeſus Lord. For this is the *method* of the Goſpel, that firſt men by the Preaching of it be made *Diſciples*, or be brought unto Faith in Chriſt Jeſus, and then be taught to do and obſerve whatever he commands, *Matth.* 28. 18, 19, 20. firſt to believe, and then to be added unto the Church, *Act.* 2. 41, 42, 46, 47. Men muſt firſt *joyn themſelves unto the Lord*, or give up themſelves unto him, before they can give up themſelves unto the Church, according to the mind of Chriſt, 2 *Cor.* 8. 5. We are not therefore concerned at preſent as unto them, who either not at all profeſs Faith in Chriſt Jeſus, or elſe through ignorance of the Fundamental Principles of Religion, and wickedneſs of Life, do deſtroy or utterly render uſeleſs that Profeſſion. We do not ſay it is the duty of ſuch perſons, that is, their *immediate duty*, in the ſtate wherein they are, to joyn themſelves unto any Church. Nay, it is the duty of every Church, to refuſe them their Communion, whilſt they abide in that ſtate. There are other duties to be in the firſt place preſſed on them, whereby they may be made meet for this. So in the Primitive times, although in the extraordinary Converſions unto Chriſtianity

anity that were made among the *Jews*, who before belonged unto *Gods Covenant*, they were all immediately added unto the Church, yet afterwards, in the ordinary way of the Converſion of men, the Churches did not immediately admit them into *compleat Communion*, but kept them as *Catechumeners*, for the encreaſe of their knowledge, and trial of their profeſſion, until they were judged meet to be joyned unto the Church. And they are not to blame who receive not ſuch into *compleat Communion* with them, unto whom it is not a preſent duty to deſire that Communion. Yea, the admiſſion of ſuch perſons into Church-Societies, much more the compelling of them to be Members of this or that Church, almoſt whether they will or no, is contrary to the rule of the Word, the example of the Primitive Churches, and a great expedient to harden men in their ſins.

We do therefore avow, that we cannot admit any into our *Church Societies*, as to compleat Membership, and actual Intereſt in the priviledges of the Church, who do not, by a *profeſſion of Faith* in, and obedience unto Jeſus Chriſt, no way contradicted by ſins of life, manifeſt themſelves to be ſuch, as whoſe duty

duty it is, to joyn themſelves unto any Church. Neither do we iujure any *baptized Perſons hereby*, or oppoſe any of their Right unto, and Intereſt in the Church, but only as they did nniverſally in the Primitive Churches, after the death of the Apoſtles, we *direct them into that way and method*, wherein they may be received unto the glory of Chriſt, and their own edification. And we do therefore affirm, that we will never deny that Communiou unto any perſon, high or low, rich or poor, old or young, male or female, *whoſe duty it is to deſire it.*

2. IT is added in the deſcription of the Subject, That it is *ſuch an one who takes due care of his owu Salvation.* Many there are who profeſs themſelves to be Chriſtians, who it may be hear the word willingly, and do many things gladly, yet do not eſteem rhemſelves obliged unto a diligent enquiry into, and a preciſe obſervation of all the commands of Chriſt. But it is ſuch whom we intend, who conſtantly fix their minds on the enjoyment of God, as their chiefeſt good and utmoſt end, who thereon duely conſider the means of attaining it, and apply themſelves thereunto. And it is to be feared, that the number of ſuch perſons will not be found to be *very great*

great in the world; which is ſufficient to take off the reproach from ſome particular Congregations of the ſmalneſs of their number. Such they ever were, and ſuch is it foretold that they ſhould be. Number was never yet eſteemed a note of the true Church, by any but thoſe, whoſe worldly intereſt it is that it ſhould ſo be; yet at preſent *abſolutely* in theſe Nations, the number of ſuch perſons is not ſmall.

3. Of theſe perſons it is ſaid, that *it is their duty ſo to diſpoſe of themſelves.* It is not that which they may do, as a convenience, or an advantage; not that which others may do for them, but which they *muſt do* for themſelves in a way of duty. It is an *Obediential Act* unto the commands of Chriſt; whereunto is required ſubjection of Conſcience unto his Authority, Faith in his promiſes, as alſo a reſpect unto an appearance before his Judgment-Throne at the laſt day. The way of the Church of *Rome* to compel men into their Communion, and keep them in it, by *fire and faggot*, or any other means of external force, derives more from the *Alcoran* than the *Goſpel*. Neither doth it anſwer the mind of Chriſt in the Inſtitution, End, and Order of Church-Societies, that men ſhould become Members of them, partly by that which

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is no way in their own power, and partly by what their wills are regulated in, by the Laws of men. For it is, as was ſaid, commonly eſteemed, that men being *born* and *baptized* in ſuch a Nation, are thereby made members of the Church of that Nation; and by living within ſuch *Parochial Precincts*, as the Law of the Land hath Arbitrarily eſtabliſhed, are members of this or that particular Congregation. At leaſt they are accounted ſo far to belong unto theſe Churches, as to render them liable unto all *outward puniſhments*, that ſhall be thought meet to be inflicted on them, who comply not with them. So far as theſe perſwaſions and actings according unto them, do prevail, ſo far are they deſtructive of the principal foundation of the external Being and Order of the Church. But that mens joyning themſelves in, or unto any Church Society, is, or ought to be, a *voluntary act*, or an act of free choice, in mere obedience unto the Authority and commands of Chriſt, is ſo ſacred a truth, ſo evident in the Scripture, ſo neceſſary from its ſubject matter, ſo teſtifyed unto by the practice of all the firſt Churches; as that it deſpiſeth all oppoſition. And I know not how any can reconcile the common practice of giving men the repu-

reputation or reality of being *Members of*, or belonging unto this or that Church, as unto total Communion, *who deſire or chuſe no ſuch thing*, unto this acknowledged principle.

5. THERE is a *double joyning unto the Church*; (1.) That which is, as unto *total Communion* in all the duties and priviledges of the Church, which is that whereof we treat. (2.) An *adherence unto the Church*, as unto the means of Inſtruction and Edification to be attained thereby. So perſons may *adhere unto any Church*, who yet are not meet, or free on ſome preſent conſideration, to confederate with it, as unto total Communion; ſee *Act.* 5. 13, 14. And of this ſort in a peculiar manner, are the *baptized Children* of the members of the Church. For although they are not capable of performing Church duties, or enjoying Church-priviledges in their tender years; nor can have a right unto total Communion, before the teſtification of their own *voluntary conſent* thereunto, and choice thereof; yet are they in a peculiar manner under the care and inſpection of the Church, ſo far as the outward adminiſtration of the Covenant in all the means of it, is committed thereunto; and their duty it is, according to their capacity, to attend unto the *Miniſtry* of that

that Church whereunto they do belong.

6. THE Propoſition reſpects a *viſible profeſſing Church.* And I intend ſuch a Church in general, as avoweth Authority from Chriſt; (1.) For the *Miniſterial Preaching* of the Word; (2.) *Adminiſtration of the Sacraments*; (3.) For the *Exerciſe of Evangelical Diſcipline*; and (4.) To *give a publick teſtimony* againſt the Devil and the World, not contradicting their profeſſion with any corrupt Principles or Practices inconſiſtent with it. What is required in particular, that any of them may be meet to be joyned unto ſuch a Church, we ſhall afterwards enquire.

7. IT is generally ſaid, that *out of the Church there is no Salvation*; and the truth hereof is teſtified unto in the Scriptures, *Act.* 2. 47. 1 *Pet.* 3. 20, 21. *Matth.* 16. 18. *Epheſ.* 5. 25, 27. *Joh.* 10. 16.

8. THIS is true both poſitively and negatively of the *Catholick Church* inviſible of the Elect: All that are of it ſhall be ſaved; and none ſhall be ſaved but thoſe that belong unto it, *Epheſ.* 5. 25, 26, 27. Of the *Catholick viſible profeſſing Church negatively*; that no Adult perſon can be ſaved, that doth not belong unto this Church, *Rom.* 10. 10.

9. THIS

9. THIS *Poſition of Truth* is abuſed by Intereſt and Pride; an encloſure of it being made by them, who of all Chriſtians in the World can lay the leaſt and weakeſt claim unto it; namely, the *Church of Rome*. For they are ſo far from being that *Catholick Church*, out of which there is no Salvation, and wherein none can periſh, like the *Ark of Noah*, that it requires the higheſt charity to reckon them unto that *viſible profeſſing Church*, whereof the greateſt part may periſh; and do ſo undoubtedly.

10. Our enquiry is, what truth there is in this Aſſertion, with reſpect unto theſe *particular Churches or Societies*, for the celebration of Goſpel-worſhip and Diſcipline, whereof we treat. And I ſay,

1. No Church, of what *denomination ſoever*, can lay a claim unto this Priviledge, as belonging unto it ſelf alone. This was the antient *Donatiſm*; They confined Salvation unto the Churches of their way alone. And after many falſe charges of it on others, it begins really to be renewed in our dayes. For ſome diſpute, that Salvation is confined unto that Church alone, wherein there is a *Succeſſion of Dioceſan Biſhops*; which is the height of *Donatiſm*. The Judgments and Determinations made concerning the

Eternal Salvation or Damnation of Men, by the meaſures of ſome differences among Chriſtians about Churches, their State and Order, are *abſurd*, *fooliſh*, *and impious*, and for the moſt part uſed by them, who ſufficiently preclaim, that they know neither what it is to be ſaved, nor do uſe any diligence about the neceſſary means of it. Salvation depends *abſolutely* on no particular Church-ſtate in the world; he knows not the Goſpel, who can really think it doth. Perſons of Believers are not for the Church, but the Church is for them: if the *Miniſtry of Angels* be for them who are Heirs of Salvation, much more is the Miniſtry of the Church ſo. If a man be an Adulterer, an Idolater, a Rayler, a hater and *ſcoffer of Godlineſs*; if he chooſe to live in any known ſin, without Repentance, or in the neglect of any known duty; if he be ignorant and prophane; in a word, if he be not *born again from above*, be he of what Church he will, and whatſoever place he poſſeſs therein, *he cannot be ſaved*. And on the other ſide, if a man believe in *Chriſt Jeſus*, that is, know him in his Perſon, Offices, Doctrine and Grace, truſt unto him for all the ends of the wiſdom and love of God towards Mankind in him; if he endeavour to yield ſincere

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and univerſal obedience unto all his commands, and to be conformed unto him, in all things following his example, having for theſe ends received of his Spirit, though all the Churches in the world ſhould reject him, yet he ſhall *undoubtedly be ſaved*. If any ſhall hence infer, that then it is all one of *what Church* any one is: I anſwer, (1.) That although the being of this or that, or any particular Church in the world, will not *ſecure the Salvation* of any men; yet the adherence unto *ſome Churches*, or ſuch as are ſo called, in their conſtitution and worſhip, may prejudice, yea, ruine the Salvation of any that ſhall ſo do. (2.) The choice of what Church we will joyn unto, belongs unto the choice and uſe of the means for our Edification. And he that makes no conſcience hereof, but merely with reſpect unto the event of being ſaved at laſt, will probably come ſhort thereof.

2. ON this Suppoſition, that there be no inſuperable difficulties lying in the way of the diſcharge of this duty, as that a perſon be caſt by the providence of God into ſuch a place or ſeaſon, wherein there *is no Church* that he can poſſibly joyn himſelf unto, or that he be unjuſtly refuſed Communion, by *unwarrantable conditions* of it, as it was with

many during the prevalency of the *Papacy* in all the *Western Empire*; it is the *indispensible duty* of every Disciple of Christ, in order unto his Edification and Salvation, voluntarily, and of his own choice, to joyn himself in and unto some *particular Congregation*, for the Celebration of divine Worship, and the due observation of all the Institutions and commands of Christ; which we shall now farther confirm.

1. THE foundation of this duty, as was before declared, doth lye in *the law and light of Nature*. Man cannot exercise the principal powers and faculties of his Soul, with which he was created, and whereby he is enabled to glorifie God, which is the end of him and them, without a consent and conjunction in the Worship of God in Communion and Society, as hath been proved before.

2. The way whereby this is to be done, God hath declared and revealed from the beginning, by the Constitution of a *Church-state*, through the addition of Arbitrary Institutions of worship, unto what was required by the Law of Nature. For this gives the true state, and is the formal reason of a *Church*, namely, a divine Addition of Arbitrary Institutions of worship, unto the necessary Dictates of the

the Law of Nature, unto that end. And the especial nature of any *Church-state*, doth depend on the especial nature of those Institutions, which is constitutive of the difference between the *Church-state* of the Old Testament and that of the New.

3. SUCH a *Church-state* was constituted and appointed under the Old Testament, founded in and on an *especial Covenant* between God and the People, *Exod.* 24. Unto this *Church* every one that would please God, and walk before him, was bound to joyn himself, by the ways and means that he had appointed for that end; namely, by *Circumcision, and their laying hold on the Covenant of God, Exod.* 12. 48. *Isa.* 56. 4. And this joyning unto the *Church*, is called *joyning unto the Lord, Isa.* 56. 6. *Jerem.* 50. 5. as being the means thereof; without which it could not be done. Herein was the Tabernacle of God with men, and he dwelt among them.

4. AS a new *Church-state* is propheſied of under the New Testament. *Ezek.* 34. 25, 26, 27. *Isa.* 66. 18, 19, 20, 21, 22. and other places innumerable; so it was actually erected by Jesus Christ, as we have declared. And whereas it is introduced and established in the place and

room of the *Church-ſtate* under the Old Teſtament, which was to be removed at *the time of Reformation*, as the Apoſtle demonſtrates at large in his *Epiſtle to the Hebrews*; all the commands, promiſes, and threatnings given or annexed unto that *Church-ſtate*, concerning the conjunction of men unto it, and walking in it, are transferred unto this of the new *erection* of Chriſt. Wherefore although the State of the *Church* it ſelf, be reduced from that which was *Nationally Congregational*, unto that which is *ſimply and abſolutely* ſo; and all Ordinances of its inſtituted worſhip are changed, with new rules for the obſervation of what we are directed unto by the light of Nature: yet the commands, promiſes, and threatnings, made and given unto it *as a Church*, are all in full force with reſpect unto this *new Church-ſtate*; and we need no new commands to render it our duty to joyn in *Evangelical Churches*, for the ends of a *Church* in general.

5. THE Lord Chriſt hath *diſpoſed all the ways and means of edification*, unto theſe *Churches*; ſo that ordinarily, and under an expectation of his preſence in them, and concurrence unto their efficacy, they are not otherwiſe to be enjoyed. Such are the ordinary *diſpenſation of the Word*, and

and *Administration of the Sacraments.* For any Disciple of Christ to live in a neglect of these things, and the enjoyment of them according to his mind, is to despise his care and wisdom, in providing for his eternal welfare.

6. HE hath *prescribed sundry duties* unto us, both as necessary, and as evidences of our being his Disciples, such as cannot be orderly performed, but as we are members of some particular Congregation: this also hath been before declared.

7. THE *Institution of these Churches*, is the way which Christ hath ordained to render his Kingdom visible or conspicuous, in distinction from, and opposition unto, the Kingdom of Satan and the world. And he doth not in a due manner, declare himself *a subject* in or unto the Kingdom of Christ, who doth not solemnly ingage in this way. It is not enough to constitute *a legal subject of the Kingdom of England*, that he is born in the Nation, and lives in some outward observance of the Laws of it, if he refuse solemnly to express his *Allegiance* in the way appointed by the Law for that end. Nor will it constitute a regular subject of the Kingdom of Christ, that he is born in a place where the Gospel is professed, and so professeth a general complyance there-

therewith; if he refuse to testifie *his subjection*, by the way that Christ hath appointed for that end. It is true, the whole Nation in their civil relation and subordination according to Law, is the *Kingdom of England*. But the representation of the Kingly power and rule in it, is in the Courts of all sorts, wherein the Kingly power is acted, openly and visibly. And he that lives in the Nation, yet denies his *homage* unto these Courts, is not to be esteemed a Subject. So doth the whole visible professing Church, in one or more Nations, or lesser precincts of people and places constitute the *visible* Kingdom of Christ; yet is no particular person to be esteemed a *legal* true Subject of Christ, that doth not *appear in these his Courts* with a Solemn expression of his Homage unto him.

8. THE whole *Administration of the Rule and Discipline* appointed by Christ, is confined unto these *Churches*; nor can they be approved by whom that rule is despised. I shall not argue farther, in a case whose truth is of so uncontroulable evidence. In all the writings of the New Testament, recording things after the Ascension of Christ, there is no mention of any of his Disciples with approbation, unless they were extraordinary Officers,

Officers, but such as were entire Members of these Assemblies.

CHAP. II.

The Subject Matter of the Church.

THE Church may be considered either as unto his *Essence*, Constitution and Being; or as unto its *Power* and *Order*, when it is *Organized*. As unto its *Essence* and Being, its constituent parts are its *Matter* and *Form*. These we must enquire into.

By the *Matter* of the Church, we understand the persons whereof the Church doth consist, with their Qualifications: And by its *Form*, the reason, cause and way of that kind of Relation among them, which gives them the Being of a Church, and therewithal an Interest in all that belongs unto a Church, either privilege, or power, as such.

Our first Enquiry being concerning *what sort of Persons* our Lord Jesus Christ requireth and admitteth to be the *visible Subjects* of his Kingdom, we are to be regulated in our Determination by respect unto his Honour, Glory, and the Holiness of

of his Rule. To reckon such persons to be Subjects of Christ, Members of his Body, such as he requires and owns, (for others are not so) who would not be tolerated, at least not approved, in a well governed *Kingdom* or *Commonwealth* of the World, is highly dishonourable unto him. But it is so come to pass, that let Men be never so notoriously and flagitiously wicked, until they become pests of the earth, yet are they esteemed to belong to the Church of Christ. And not only so, but it is thought little less than *Schism* to forbid them the Communion of the Church in all its sacred Privileges. Howbeit, the Scripture doth in general represent the Kingdom or Church of Christ, to consist of persons *called Saints*, separated from the World, with many other things of alike nature, as we shall see immediately. And if the *Honour of Christ* were of such weight with us as it ought to be, if we understood aright the nature and ends of his Kingdom, and that the peculiar Glory of it, above all the Kingdoms in the World, consists in the *Holiness of its Subjects*, such an Holiness as the world in its wisdom knoweth

Psal. 15. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. *Psal.* 24. 3, 4. *Psal.* 93. 5. 2 *Cor.* 8. 23. *Ephes.* 5. 27.

knoweth not, we would duly conſider whom we avow to belong thereunto. Thoſe who know ought of theſe things, will not profeſs that perſons openly prophane, vicious, ſenſual, wicked and ignorant, are approved and owned of Chriſt as the Subjects of his Kingdom, or that it is his will that we ſhould receive them into the Communion of the Church 2 *Tim.* 3. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. But an old *opinion* of the unlawfulneſs of ſeparation from a Church, on the account of the *mixture of wicked men* in it, is made a ſcare-crow to frighten men from attempting the Reformation of the greateſt Evils, and a covert for the compoſing Churches of ſuch members only.

Some things therefore are to be premiſed unto what ſhall be offered unto the right ſtating of this Enquiry: As,

1. THAT if there be no more required of any as unto *Perſonal Qualifications* in a viſible uncontroulable profeſſion, to conſtitute them Subjects of Chriſts Kingdom, and Members of his Church, but what is required by the moſt righteous and ſevere *Laws of men* to conſtitute a *good Subject* or *Citizen*, the diſtinction between his viſible Kingdom and the *Ezek.* 22. 26.

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Kingdoms of the World, as unto the principal causes of it, is utterly lost. Now all negative Qualifications, as that Men are not Oppressors, Drunkards, Revilers, Swearers, Adulterers, *&c.* are required hereunto. But yet it is so fallen out, that generally more is required to constitute such a *Citizen* as shall represent the righteous Laws he liveth under, than to constitute a Member of the Church of Christ.

2. THAT whereas *Regeneration* is expressly required in the Gospel, to give a Right and Privilege unto an entrance into the Church or Kingdom of Christ, whereby that Kingdom of his is distinguished from all other Kingdoms in and of the World, unto an Interest wherein never any such thing was required; it must of necessity be something *better*, more *excellent* and *sublime* than any thing the Laws and Polities of men pretend unto or prescribe. Wherefore it cannot consist in any outward *Rites*, easie to be observed by the worst and vilest of men, besides the Scripture gives us a description of it, in opposition unto its consisting in any such *Rite*, 1 *Pet.* 3. 21. And many things required unto good Citizens, are far better

Joh. 3. 3. *Tit.* 3. 3, 4, 5.

ter than the meer obſervation of ſuch a *Rite*.

Of this Regeneration *baptiſm* is the *Symbol*, the Sign, Expreſſion and Repreſentation. Wherefore unto thoſe who are in a due manner partakers of it, it giveth all the external Rights and Privileges which belong unto them that are *Regenerate*, until they come unto ſuch Seaſons, wherein the *perſonal* performance of thoſe Duties whereon the continuation of the eſtate of viſible Regeneration doth depend, is required of them. Herein if they fail, they loſe all privilege and benefit by their Baptiſm. *Joh.* 3. 5. *Act.* 2. 38. 1*Pet.*3.21.

So ſpeaks the Apoſtle in the caſe of Circumciſion under the Law, *Rom.* 2. 25. *For Circumciſion verily profiteth, if thou keep the Law; but if thou be a breaker of the Law, thy Circumciſion is made uncircumciſion.* It is ſo in the caſe of *baptiſm.* Verily it *profiteth*, if a man ſtand unto the Terms of the Covenant which is tendered therein between God and his Soul; for it will give him Right unto all the outward Privileges of a *Regenerate State*; but if he do not, as in the ſight of God his *baptiſm* is *no baptiſm*, as unto the real Communication of Grace *Phil.* 3. 18, 19.

and acceptance with him; *Tit.* 1. 15, 16. so in the ſight of the Church, it is *no baptiſm*, as unto a participation of the external Rights and Privileges of a *Regenerate ſtate*.

4. GOD alone is judge *Act.* 15. 8. *Rev.* 2. 23. concerning this *Regeneration*, as unto its *internal, real principle and ſtate in the Souls of men* whereon the participation of all the ſpiritual advantages of the Covenant of Grace doth depend: The Church is judge of its *evidences* and *fruits* in their external Demonſtration, as unto a *Act.* 8. 13. participation of the *outward Privileges* of a *Regenerate ſtate*, and no farther. And we ſhall hereon briefly declare what belongs unto the forming of a right judgment herein, and who are to be eſteemed fit Members of any Goſpel Church State, or have a right ſo to be.

1. SUCH as from *1 Cor.* 6. 9, 10, 11. *Phil.* 3. 18, 19. 2 *Theſ.* 3, 6. 2 *Tim.* 3. 5. *Rom.* 9, 6, 7. *Tit.* 1. 16. whom we are obliged to *with-draw* or *with-hold Communion*, can be no part of the matter *conſtituent* of a Church, or are not meet Members for the firſt conſtitution of it. But ſuch are all *Habitual Sinners*; thoſe

thoſe who having prevalent habits and Inclinations unto Sins of any kind unmortified, do walk according unto them. Such are prophane Swearers, Drunkards, Fornicators, Covetous, Oppreſſors, and the like, *who ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* 1 *Cor.* 6. 9, 10. 11. *Phil.* 3. 18 19. 2 *Theſſ.* 3. 6. 2 *Tim.* 3. 5. as a man living and dying in *any known Sin*, that' is *habitually*, without Repentance cannot be ſaved; ſo a man known to live in Sin, cannot regularly be received into any Church. To compoſe Churches of *Habitual Sinners*, and that either as unto Sins of Commiſſion, or Sins of Omiſſion, is not to erect Temples to Chriſt, but Chapels unto the Devil.

2. SUCH as being in the fellowſhip of the Church, are to be *admoniſhed of any ſcandalous Sin*, which if they repent not of, they are to be *caſt out of the Church*, are not meet Members for the *Original Conſtitution* of a Church. This is the ſtate of them who abide *Obſtinate in any known Sin*, whereby they have given *Offence* unto others, without a profeſſed Repentance thereof, although they have not lived in it *habitually*.

Mat. 18. 16, 17, 18.

1 *Cor.* 5. 11.

3. THEY are to be such as *visibly answer* the Description given of Gospel Churches in the Scripture, so as the *Titles* assigned therein unto the Members of such Churches, may on good grounds be appropriated unto them. To compose Churches of such Persons as do not visibly answer the character given of what they were of old, and what they were always to be by virtue of the Law of Christ or Gospel-constitution, is not Church *Edification*, but *Destruction*. And those who look on the things spoken of all Church Members of old, as that they were *Saints by calling*, *lively stones* in the house of God, *justified* and *sanctified*, *separate from the World*, &c. as those which were in them, and did indeed belong unto them, but even deride the necessity of the same things in present Church Members, or the Application of them unto those who are so, are themselves no small part of that woful *Degeneracy* which Christian Religion is fallen under. Let it then be considered what is spoken of the Church of the *Jews* in their Dedication unto God, as unto their *Typical Holiness*, with the Application of it unto Christian Churches in *real Holiness*, 1 *Pet.* 2. 5. 9. with the Description given of them constantly in the Scripture, as *Faithful*, *Holy*,

Holy, Believing, as the *Houſe of God*, as his *Temple* wherein he dwells by his Spirit, as the *Body of Chriſt* united and compacted by the communication of the Spirit unto them; as alſo what is ſaid concerning their ways, walkings and duties; and it will be uncontrolably evident of what ſort our *Church Members* ought to be; nor are thoſe of any other ſort able to diſcharge the *Duties* which are incumbent on all Church-members, nor to uſe the *Privileges* they are intruſted withal. Wherefore, I ſay, to ſuppoſe Churches regularly to conſiſt of ſuch perſons for the greater part of them, as no way anſwer the *Deſcription given of Church-members* in their Original Inſtitution, nor capable to diſcharge the Duties preſcribed unto them, but giving evidence of Habits and Actions inconſiſtent therewithal, is not only to diſturb all Church Order, but utterly to *overthrow* the Ends and Being of Churches, Nor is there any thing more ſcandalous unto Chriſtian Religion, than what *Bellarmine* affirms to be the judgment of the *Papiſts* in oppoſition unto all others; namely, that *no internal Vertue or Grace is required unto the Conſtitution of a Church in its Members.* Lib. 3. *de Eccleſ. cap* 2.

Rom. 10. 10. 2 *Cor.* 8. 5. Chap. 9. 13. *Matth.* 10.32, 33. *Luke* 9. 15. 2 *Tim.* 2. 12. *Rom.* 15. 9. *Joh.*12.42. 1 *Joh.* 4. 2, 3, 15.

4. THEY must be such as do *make an open profession of the subjection of their Souls and Consciences unto the Authority of Christ in the Gospel, and their readiness to yield Obedience unto all his Commands.* This I suppose will not be denied; for not only doth the Scripture make this *Profession* necessary unto the participation of any benefit or privilege of the Gospel; but the nature of the things themselves requires indispensably that so it should be. For nothing can be more unreasonable than, that men should be taken into the privileges attending *Obedience* unto the Laws and Commands of Christ, without avowing or professing that *Obedience*. Wherefore, our Enquiry is only what is required unto *such a Profession*, as may render men meet to be Members of a Church, and give them a Right thereunto. For to suppose such a confession of Christian Religion to be compliant with the Gospel, which is made by many who openly *live in Sin*, being *disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate*, is to renounce the Gospel it self. Christ is not the High Priest of such

such a *Profession*. I shall therefore declare briefly what is necessary unto this *Profession*, that all may know what it is which is required unto the entrance of any into our Churches, wherein our *Practice* hath been sufficiently traduced.

1. THERE is required unto it a *competent knowledge* of Doctrines and Mystery of the Gospel, especially concerning the *Person and Offices of Christ*. The Confession hereof, was the ground whereon he granted the *Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*, or all Church Power unto Believers, *Matth*, 16. 17, 18, 19. The first Instruction which he gave unto his Apostles, was, That they should *teach men* by the preaching of the Gospel, in the knowledge of the Truth revealed by him. The knowledge required in the Members of the *Judaical Church*, that they might be translated into the *Christian*, was principally, if not solely, that of his *Person*, and the acknowledgment of him to be the true *Messiah*, the Son of God. For as on their unbelief thereof their Eternal ruine did depend, as he told them, *if you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins*; so the confession of him was sufficient on their part unto their Admission into the Gospel Church State. And the Reasons of it are apparent.

With

With others, an Inſtruction in all the Myſteries of Religion, eſpecially in thoſe that are *fundamental*, is neceſſary unto the Profeſſion we enquire after. So *Juſtin Martyr* tells us what pains they took in thoſe Primitive Times, to inſtruct thoſe in the Myſteries of Religion, who upon a *general Conviction of its Truth*, were willing to adhere unto the Profeſſion of it. And what was their Judgment herein, is ſufficiently known, from the keeping a multitude in the ſtate of *Catecumens*, before they would admit them into the Fellowſhip of the Church. They are not therefore to be blamed, they do but diſcharge their Duty, who refuſe to receive into Church Communion ſuch as are *ignorant* of the fundamental Doctrines and Myſteries of the Goſpel; or if they have learned any thing of them from a form of words, yet really *underſtand nothing* of them. The promiſcuous driving of all ſorts of perſons who have been baptized in their Infancy, unto a participation of all Church privileges, is a *profanation* of the holy Inſtitutions of Chriſt. This knowledge therefore belonging unto profeſſion is it ſelf to be profeſſed.

2. THERE is required unto it *a profeſſed ſubjection of Soul and Conſcience unto the*

the Authority of Christ in the Church, Matth. 28. 18, 19, 20. 2 *Cor.* 8. 5. This in general is performed by all that are *Baptized* when they are *Adult*, as being by their own actual consent *baptized in the Name of Christ*. And it is required of all them who are baprized in their Infancy, when they are able with Faith and Understanding to profess their consent unto, and abiding in that Covenant whereinto they were initiated.

3. An Instruction in, and consent unto the *Doctrine of Self-denial and bearing of the Cross*, in a particular manner: For this is made indispensably necessary by our Saviour himself, unto all that will be his Disciples. *Matth.* 10. 37, 38, 39. *Mar.* 8. 34. 38. *Luk.* 9. 23. *Phil.* 3. 18. *Act.* 4. 10, 11, 20. *Act.* 24. 14. And it hath been a great disadvantage unto the Glory of Christian Religion, that men have not been more and better instructed therein. It is commonly thought, that who ever will, may be a Christian at an *easie rate*, it will cost him nothing. But the Gospel gives us another account of these things. For it not only warns us, that Reproaches, Hatred, Sufferings of all sorts, oft-times to Death it self, are the common lot of all

all its Profeſſors, *who will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus*; but alſo requires, that at our initiation into the Profeſſion of it, we conſider aright the dread of them all, and engage cheerfully to undergo them. Hence, in the *Primitive Times*, whilſt all ſorts of miſeries were continually preſented unto them who embraced the Chriſtian Religion, their willing engagement to undergo them, who were converted, was a firm evidence of the ſincerity of their Faith, as it ought to be unto us alſo in times of Difficulty and Perſecution. Some may ſuppoſe that the Faith and Confeſſion of this Doctrine of *Self-denial* and *readineſs for the Croſs*, is of uſe only in time of *Perſecution*, and ſo doth not belong unto them who have continually the countenance and favour of publick Authority. I ſay, it is, at leaſt as they judge, well for them; with others it is not ſo, whoſe outward ſtate makes the publick avowing of this Duty indiſpenſably neceſſary unto them: And I may add it as my own thoughts, (though they are not my own alone) That notwithſtanding all the Countenance that is given unto any Church by the *publick Magiſtracy*, yet whilſt we are in this World, thoſe who will faithfully diſcharge their Duty, as Miniſters of the Goſpel

Gospel especially, shall have need to be prepared for sufferings. To escape sufferings, and enjoy worldly advantages by sinful compliances, or bearing with men in their Sins, is no Gospel Direction.

4, *Conviction and Confession of Sin, with the way of deliverance by Jesus Christ, is that answer of a good Conscience*, that is required in the Baptism of them that are Adult. 1 *Pet.* 3.

5. Unto this Profession is required the *constant performance of all known Duties* of Religion, both of *Piety* in the publick and private Worship of God, as also of *Charity* with respect unto others. *Shew me thy Faith by thy Works.* *Matth.* 28. 19, 20.

6. A careful *Abstinence from all known Sins*, giving scandal or offence, either unto the World, or unto the Church of God. And the Gospel requires, that this Confession be made (*with the Mouth Confession is made unto Salvation*) against (1.) *Fear*, (2.) *Shame*, (3.) The *Course of the World*, (4.) The *Opposition* of all Enemies whatever. 1 *Cor.* 10. 32. *Phil.* 1. 10.

Hence it appears, that there are none excluded from an Entrance into the Church State, but such as are either, (1.) *grosly*

(1.) *grosly Ignorant*, or, (2.) *Persecuters*, or reproachers of those that are good, or of the ways of God wherein they walk; or, (3.) *Idolaters*; or, (4.) Men *scandalous in their Lives* in the Commission of Sins, or Omission of Duties, thro' vitious Habits or Inclinations; or, (5.) such as would partake of Gospel Privileges and Ordinances, yet openly avow that they *will not submit unto the Laws and Commands of Christ in the Gospel*, concerning whom, and the like, the Scripture Rule is peremptory; *From such turn away.*

And herein we are remote from exceeding the example and care of the Primitive Churches. Yea, there are but few, if any, that arrive unto it. Their endeavour was to Preach unto all they could, and rejoiced in the *multitudes that came to hear the Word.* But if any did essay to join themselves unto the Church, their diligence in their Examination and Instruction, their severe Enquiries into their Conversation, their disposing of them for a long time into a state of *Expectation* for their Trial, before their Admittance, were remarkable. And some of the Ancients complain, that their *promiscuous Admittance* of all sorts of persons that would profess the Christian

Christian Religion, into Church Membership, which took place afterwards, ruined all the Beauty, Order and Discipline of the Church.

The things ascribed unto those who are to be esteemed the proper *Subject Matter of a Visible Church*, are such as in the *judgment of Charity* entitles them unto all the Appellations of *Saints*, *Called*, *Sanctified*, that is *Visibly* and by *Profession*, which are given unto the Members of all the Churches in the *New Testament*, and which must be answered in those who are admitted into that Priledge, if we do not wholly neglect our only Patterns. By these things, although they should any of them, not be *real living Members* of the Mystical Body of Christ, unto whom he is an Head of spiritual and vital influance; yet are they meet Members of that Body of Christ unto which he is an *Head of Rule and Government*; as also meet to be esteemed Subjects of his Kingdom. And none are excluded but such, as concerning whom Rules are given, either to withdraw from them, or to cast them out of Church Society, or are expresly excluded by God himself from any share in the *Prieiledges of his Covenant*, Psal. 50. 16, 17. *But unto the Wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my Statutes, or that thou shouldest take my*

Covenant in thy Mouth? Seeing thou hateſt inſtruction, and caſteſt my words behind thee.

Advertiſement.

OF the Subject Matter of the Church: You may be ſatisfied farther in a Book lately Published: Intituled, *The true Nature of a Goſpel Church* and its *Government*: By the ſame Author, wherein thoſe following particulars are diſtinctly handled.

I. The Subject Matter of the Church.

II. Formal Cauſe of a particular Church.

III. Of the Polity unto, or Diſcipline of the *Church* in General.

IV. The Officers of *the* Church.

V. The Duty of Paſtors of Churches.

VI. The Office of Teachers in the Church.

VII. Of the Rule of the Church, or of Ruling Elders.

VIII. The Nature of the Polity or Rule, with the Duty of Elders.

IX. Of Deacons.

X. Excommunication.

XI. *Of the Communion* of Churches.

Sold at the *Bible* in *Newgate-ſtreet*, by *William Marſhal.*

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

The Continuation of a Church-ſtate, and of the Adminiſtration of Evangelical Ordinances of Worſhip, briefly Vindicated.

THE Controverſie about *the Continuation of a Church-ſtate*, and the Adminiſtration of Goſpel Ordinances of Worſhip, is not new, in this Age, though ſome pride themſelves, as though the Invention of the Error whereby they are denied, were their own: In former Ages, both in the *Papacy*, and among ſome of them that forſook it, there were divers who on a pretence of a peculiar Spiritually, and imaginary Attainments in Religion, wherein theſe things are unneceſſary, rejected their Obſervation. I ſuppoſe it neceſſary briefly to confirm the Truth, and Vindicate it from this exception, becauſe though it be ſufficiently *weak in it ſelf*, yet what it is, lies againſt the Foundation of all that we are pleading about. But to reduce things into the leſſer compaſs; I ſhall firſt confirm the Truth by thoſe Arguments or Conſiderations, which will defeat all the Pleas and Pretences of

them, by whom it is oppoſed; and then confirm it by poſitive Teſtimonies and Arguments, with all Brevity poſſible.

Firſt, therefore I ſhall argue from the removal of all cauſes, whereon ſuch a *Ceſſation of Churches and Ordinances* is pretended. For it is granted on all hands, that they had a Divine Original and Inſtitution, and were obſerved by all the Diſciples of *Chriſt*, as things by him commanded. If now therefore they ceaſe as unto their force, efficacy and uſe, it muſt be on ſome of theſe Reaſons.

1. Becauſe *a limited Time and Seaſon was fixed upon them*, which is now expired. So was it with the *Church-ſtate* and Ordinances of old; they were appointed *unto the time of Reformation*, Heb. 9. 10 They had a certain time prefixed unto their duration, according to the Degrees of whoſe approach *they waxed old*, and at length utterly diſappeared, *chap.* 8 13. until that time they were all punctually to be obſerved, *Mal.* 4. 4. But there were many antecedent Indications of the Will of God concerning their Ceſſation and Abolition, whereof the Apoſtle diſputes at large in his Epiſtle unto the *Hebrews*. And from a pretended ſuppoſition, that ſuch was the ſtate of *Evangelical Ordinances*, namely, that they had a time prefixed unto their Duration,

Duration, did the first opposition against them arise. For *Montanus*, with his Followers, imagined that the appointments of Christ and his Apostles in the Gospel, were to continue in force only unto the coming of the *Paraclete*, or the Comforter, promised by him. And adding a new *Phrensie* hereunto, that that *Paraclete* was then first come in *Montanus*, they rejected the Institutions of the Gospel, and made new Laws & Rules for themselves. And this continues to be the principal pretence of them by whome the use of Gospel-Ordinances is at present rejected, as that which is of no force or efficacy. Either *they have received*, or do speedily look for such a Dispensation of the Spirit, or his Gifts, as wherein they are to cease and disappear. But nothing can be more vain than this pretence.

1. It is so as unto *the limitation of any Time*, as unto their Duration and Continuance. For (1.) There is no Intimation given of any such thing, either in the Divine Word, Promise, Declaration about them, or the Nature of the Institutions themselves. But whereas those of the *Old Testament* were *in Time* to be removed, that the Church might not be offended thereby, seeing Originally they were all of immediate Divine Institution, God

did by all manner of ways, as by Promiſes, expreſs Declarations, and by the Nature of the Inſtitutions themſelves, *foreſignifie their removal*, as the Apoſtle proves at large in his Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*. But nothing of this Nature can be pretended concerning the Goſpel *Church ſtate* or Worſhip. (2.) There is no *Prediction* or Intimation of any other way of Worſhip, or ſerving God in this World, that ſhould be introduced in the room of that eſtabliſhed at firſt; ſo that upon a Ceſſation thereof, the *Church* muſt be left unto all uncertainties and utter ruin. (3.) The principal Reaſon why a *Church-ſtate* was erected of old, and Ordinances of Worſhip appointed therein, that were all to be removed and taken away, was, that *the Son, the Lord over his own Houſe*, might have the Preheminence in all things. His Glory it was to put an end unto the Law, as given by the *Diſpoſition of Angels*, and the Miniſtry of *Moſes*, by the Inſtitution of a *Church-ſtate* and Ordinances of his own appointment. And if his Revelation of the Will of God therein be not compleat, perfect, ultimate, unalterable, if it be to expire, it muſt be, that Honour may be given *above him, unto one greater than he*.

2. It is ſo, as unto their *Decay, or the loſs of their primitive Force and Efficacy*. For their

their Efficacy unto their proper Ends, depends on, (1.) *The Institution* of Christ: This is the Foundation of all Spiritual Efficacy unto Edification in the *Church*, or whatever belongs thereunto. And therefore whatever *Church-state* may be framed, or Duties, ways or means of Worship appointed by Men, that have not his Institution, how specious soever they may appear to be, have no Spiritual Force or Efficacy, as unto the Edification of the *Church*, But whilst this *Institution* of Christ continues irrevocable, and is not *Abrogated* by a greater Power than what it was enacted by, whatever defect there may be as unto Faith and Obedience in Men, rendring them useless and ineffectual unto themselves; however they may be corrupted by additions unto them, or detractions from them, changing their Nature and Use; in themselves they continue to be of the same *Use and Efficacy* as they were at the beginning. (2.) On the *Promise of Christ*, that he will be present with his Disciples in the Observation of his Commands unto the Consumation of all things, *Matt.* 28. 20. To deny the continued accomplishment of this Promise, and that on any pretence whatever, is the Venom of Infidelity. If therefore they have an irrevocable Divine Institution; if *Christ* be

preſent in their Adminiſtrations, as he was of old, *Revel.* 2. 1. there can be no abatement of their Efficacy unto their proper ends, in the Nature of Inſtrumental Cauſes. (3.) On the *Covenant of God*, which gives an infallible inſeperable Conjunction between the Word, or the Church and its Inſtitution by the Word, and the Spirit, *Iſa.* 59. 21. God's *Covenant* with his People is the Foundation of every *Church-ſtate*, of all Offices, Powers, Priviledges, and Duties there unto belonging. They have no other end, they are of no other uſe, but to Communicate, expreſs, declare, and exemplifie on the one hand, *the Grace of God in his Covenant* unto his People; and on the other, *the Duties of his People* according unto the Tenor of the ſame Covenant unto him. They are the Way, means, and Inſtruments appointed of God for this end, and other end they have none. And hereon it follows, that if it be not in the power of Men, to appoint any thing that ſhall be *a means of Communication* between God and his People, as unto the Grace of the Covenant, on the one Hand, or the Duties of Obedience which it requires, on the other; they have no power to erect any new *Church-ſtate*, or enact any thing in Divine Worſhip, not of his Inſtitution. This being

ing the ſtate of Churches and their Ordinances, they cannot be altered, they cannot be liable unto any decay, unleſs the *Covenant* whereunto they are annexed, be altered or decayed. And therefore the Apoſtle to put finally and abſolutely his Argument unto an Iſſue, to prove that the *Moſaical* Church-State and Ordinances were changed, becauſe uſeleſs and ineffectual, doth it on this ground, that the *Covenant* whereunto they were annexed, was changed and become uſeleſs. This I ſuppoſe at preſent will not be ſaid concerning the *New Covenant*, whereunto all Ordinances of Divine Worſhip are inſeparably annexed.

Men might at a cheaper Rate, as unto the Eternal intereſt of their own Souls, provide another Covering for their ſloth, negligence, unbelief, and indulgence unto proud fooliſh imaginations, whereby they render the Churches and Ordinances of the Goſpel uſeleſs and ineffectual unto themſelves; thereby charging them with a decay and uſeleſneſs, and ſo reflecting on the honour and faithfulneſs of Chriſt himſelf.

2. THEY do not ceaſe, becauſe there is at preſent, or at leaſt there is ſhortly to be expected, *ſuch an effuſion of the Gifts and Graces of the Spirit, as to render all theſe* ex-

external Inſtitutions needleſs, and conſequently uſeleſs. This alſo is falſely pretended. For (1.) The greateſt and moſt plentiful effuſion of the Holy Spirit in his Gifts and Graces, was in the days of the Apoſtles, and of the firſt *Churches* planted by them; nor is any thing beyond it, or indeed equal unto it, any more to be expected in this World. But yet then was the *Goſpel Church-ſtate* erected, and the uſe of all its Ordinances of Worſhip enjoyned. (2.) The *Miniſtry of the Goſpel* which comprizeth all the Ordinances of Church worſhip, as its object and end, is the *Miniſtration of the Spirit*, and therefore no ſupplies or Communication of him can render it uſeleleſs. (3.) One of the *principal ends* for which the Communication of the Spirit is promiſed unto the *Church*, is to make and render all the Inſtitutions of Chriſt effectual unto its edification. (4.) 1 *Joh.* 2. 20, 27. is uſually pleaded as giving countenance unto this fond pretence. But (1.) The *Unction* mentioned by the Apoſtle, was then upon all Believers. Yet (2.) It is known that then they all walked in *Church-Order*, and the ſacred obſervation of all the Inſtitutions of Chriſt. (3.) If it takes away any thing, it is the *Preaching of the Word*, or all manner of Teaching and Inſtruction; which

which is to overthrow the whole Scripture, and to reduce Religion into *Barbariſm* (4.) Nothing is intended in theſe words, but the different way of Teaching, and degrees of Succeſs, between that under the Law, and that now eſtabliſhed in the Goſpel by the plentiful effuſion of the Spirit, as hath been evidenced at large elſewhere. Nor 3. Do they ceaſe in their Adminiſtration, for *want either of Authority or Ability to diſpenſe them*; which is pleaded unto the ſame end. But neither is this pretence of any force; it only begs the thing in Queſtion. The Authority of Office for the Adminiſtration of all other Ordinances, is an Inſtitution. And to ſay that *all Inſtitutions ceaſe*, becauſe none *have Authority* to adminiſter them, is to ſay they muſt all ceaſe, becauſe they are ceaſed. (2.) The *Office of the Miniſtry* for the continuation of the *Church-ſtate*, and Adminiſtration of all Ordinances of Worſhip unto the end of the World, is ſufficiently ſecured. (1.) By the *Law*, conſtitution and appointment of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, erecting that Office, and giving warranty for its continuance to the Conſumation of all things, *Matt.* 28. 20. *Epheſ.* 4. 13. (2.) By his continuance according unto his promiſe to communicate *Spiritual Gifts* unto Men, for the Miniſte-

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rial Edification of the *Church*. That this he doth ſo continue to do, that is is the principal external Evidence of his abiding in the diſcharge of his Mediatory Office, and of what nature theſe gifts are, I have declared at large in a peculiar Diſcourſe on that ſubject. (3.) On the duty of Believers or of the *Church*, which is, to chooſe, call, and ſolemnly ſet apart unto the Office of the Miniſtry, ſuch as the Lord Chriſt by his Spirit, hath made meet for it, according unto the rule of his word.

If all theſe, or any of them do fail, I acknowledge that all *Miniſterial Authority* and Ability, for the diſpenſation of Goſpel-Ordinances muſt fail alſo, and conſequently the ſtate of the *Church*. And thoſe who plead for the continuation of a ſucceſſive Miniſtry, without reſpect unto theſe things, without reſolving both the Authority and Office of it unto them, do but erect a *dead Image*, or embrace a dead carcaſe, inſtead of the living and life giving Inſtitutions of Chriſt. They take away the living Creature, and ſet up a *skin ſtuffed with ſtraw*. But if theſe things do unalterably continue; if the Law of Chriſt can neither be changed, abrogated, or diſannulled, if his diſpenſation of Spiritual gifts according unto his promiſe cannot be impeded; if Believers

through

through his grace will continue in obedience unto his commands, it is not possible there should be an *utter failure* in this Office, and Office-power of this Ministry. It may fail in this or that place, in this or that *Church*, when the Lord Christ will remove his Candlestick. But it hath a living root whence it will spring again in other places and Churches, whilst this world doth endure. Neither

4. Do they cease, because they have been all of them *corrupted*, *abused*, *and defiled* in the Apostacy which fell out among all the *Churches* in the latter Ages, as it was fully foretold in the Scripture. For (1.) This supposition would make the whole *Kingdom of Christ* in the world to depend on the *corrupt Lusts* and wills of men, which have got by any means, the outward possession of the Administration of his Laws and Ordinances. This is all one as if we should say, that if a pack of wicked Judges should for a season pervert Justice, Righteousness and Judgment, that the being of the Kingdom is to overthrown thereby, as that it can never be restored. (2.) It would make all the duties and all the priviledges of all true Believers to depend on the wills of wicked Apostates. For if they may not make use of what they have abused, they can never yield Obedience to the commands of

Christ, nor enjoy the priviledges which he hath annexed unto his Church and Worship. (3.) On this supposition, all *Reformation* of an Apostatized *Church*, is utterly impossible. But it is our duty to heal even *Babylon* it self. by a reduction of all things unto their first Institution, if it would be healed, *Jerem.* 51. 9. and if not, we are to forsake her, and reform our selves, *Rev.* 18. 4.

There is nothing therefore in all these pretences, that should in the least impeach the *infallible continuation* of the Evangelical *Churches* and Worship, as to their right, unto the end of the world. And the Heads of those Arguments whereby the Truth is invincibly confirmed, may be briefly touched on.

1. There are expres Testimonies of the Will of Christ, and his promise for its accomplishment, that the *Church* and all its *Ordinances* of Worship should *be continued always unto the end of the world.* So as to the *Church* it self, *Matth.* 16. 18. *Rev.* 21. 3. The *Ministry*, *Matth.* 28. 20. *Ephes.* 4. 13. *Baptism*, *Matth.* 28. 18, 19, 20. The *Lords Supper*, 1 *Cor.* 11. 26. As for other Institutions, Publick Prayer, Preaching the word, the Lords day, singing of Gods Praises, the exercise of Discipline with what belongs thereunto, they have their

their foundation in *the Law and Light of Nature*, being only directed and applied unto the Goſpel-Church-ſtate and worſhip, by Rules of eſpecial Inſtitution, and they can no more ceaſe, than the original Obligation of that Law can ſo do.

If it be ſaid, that notwithſtanding what may be thus pleaded, yet *de facto*, the true ſtate of Goſpel-Churches, and their whole worſhip as unto its Original Inſtitution did fail under the *Papal Apoſtacy*, and therefore may do ſo again: I Anſwer, (1.) We do not plead that this ſtate of things muſt be always *viſible* and conſpicuous, wherein all *Proteſtant Writers* do agree. It is acknowledged, that as unto publick view, Obſervation and Notoriety, all theſe things were loſt under the Papacy, and may be ſo again under a renewed Apoſtacy. (2.) I do not plead it to be neceſſary *de facto*, that there ſhould be really at all times, a true viſible Church as the ſeat of all Ordinances and Adminiſtrations in the world; but all ſuch Churches may fail, not only as unto Viſibility, but as unto their Exiſtence. But this ſuppoſition of a failure of all inſtituted *Churches* and *Worſhip*, I grant only with theſe Limitations. (1.) That it is of Neceſſity from innumerable Divine Promiſes, and the nature of Chriſt's

Kingly office, that there be always in the world *a number greater or leſſer of ſincere Believers*, that openly profeſs ſubjection and obedience unto him. (2.) That in theſe Perſons there reſides *an indefeazable Right* always to gather themſelves into a Church ſtate, and to adminiſter all Goſpel ordinances, which all the world cannot deprive them of; which is the whole of what I now plead for. And let it be obſerved, that all the enſuing Arguments depend on this *Right*, and not on any *Matter of Fact*. (3.) I do not know how far God may accept of Churches in *a very corrupt ſtate*, and of worſhip much depraved, until they have new means for their Reformation. Nor will I make any judgment of Perſons as unto their *eternal Condition*, who walk in Churches ſo corrupted, and in the performance of worſhip ſo depraved. But as unto them who know them to be ſo corrupted and depraved, it is *a damnable ſin* to joyn with them, or not to ſeparate from them, *Revel.* 18. 4.

2. The Nature and Uſe of the Goſpel *Church*-ſtate require and prove the *uninterrupted continuance* of the Right of its Exiſtence, and the obſervance of all *Ordinances* of Divine Worſhip therein, with a Power in them, in whom that Right doth

doth indefeazably reſide, that is, all true Believers, to bring it forth into exerciſe and practice notwithſtanding the external Impediments which in ſome places at ſome times may interrupt its exerciſe. In the obſervation of Chriſt's Inſtitutions, and Celebration of the ordinances of Divine Worſhip, doth the Church-ſtate of the Goſpel, as profeſſing, conſiſt. It doth ſo in oppoſition. (1.) Unto the *World* and the Kingdom of Satan. For hereby do men *call Jeſus Lord*, as 1 *Cor.* 12. 3 and avow their ſubjection unto his Kingly Power, (2.) Unto *the Church-ſtate of the Old Teſtament*, as the Apoſtle diſputes at large in his Epiſtle unto the *Hebrews*. And this ſtate of the profeſſing *Church* in this World is unalterable, becauſe it is the *beſt ſtate* that the Believing Church is capable of. For ſo the Apoſtle plainly proves, that hereby the believing *Church* is brought εἰς τελείωσιν, which it was not under the Law; that is, unto its *Conſummation*, in the moſt compleat Perfection that God hath deſigned unto it on this ſide Glory, *Heb.* 7. 11, 19. For Chriſt in all his Offices is the immediate *Head* of it: Its Conſtitution, and the Revelation of the ways of its Worſhip, are an effect of his *Wiſdom*; and from thence is it eminently ſuited unto all *the ends of the Cove-*

nant, both on the part of God and man, and is therefore liable to no Intercision, or Alteration.

3. *The visible Administration of the Kingdom of Christ* in this World, consists in this Church-state, with the Administration of his Institutions and Laws therein. A Kingdom the Lord Jesus Christ hath in this World; and though it be not of the World, yet in the World it must be, until the World shall be no more. The Truth of all God's Promises in the Scripture depends on this one Assertion. We need not here concern our selves what Notions some men have about the exercise of this Kingdom in the world, with respect unto the outward affairs and concerns of it. But this is certain, that this Kingdom of Christ in the world, so far as it is external and visible, consists in the *Laws* he hath given, the *Institutions* he hath appointed, the *Rule* or *Politie* he hath prescribed, with the *due observance* of them, Now all these things do make, constitute, and are the Church-state and Worship enquired after. Wherefore as Christ alway hath and ever will have *an Invisible Kingdom* in this world, in the Souls of Elect Believers, led, guided, ruled by his Spirit; so he will have *a visible Kingdom* also, consisting in a profes-

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ſed avowed Subjection unto the Laws of his word, *Rom.* 10. 10. And although this Kingdom, or his Kingdom in this ſence, may as unto the *eſſence* of it be preſerved in the external Profeſſion of individual perſons, and it may be, ſo exiſt in the world for a ſeaſon; yet the honour of it, and its compleat eſtabliſhment, conſiſts in the *viſible profeſſion of Churches*, which he will therefore maintain unto the end. But by *Viſible* in this Diſcourſe, I underſtand not that which is conſpicuous and eminent unto all, though the Church hath been ſo, and ſhall yet be ſo again; nor yet that which is actually ſeen or known by others; but only that which may be ſo, or is capable of being ſo known. Nor do I aſſert a Neceſſity hereof, as unto a conſtant preſervation of Purity and Regularity in Order and Ordinances, according to the Original Inſtitution of them in any place; but only of *an unalterable Right and Power in Believers to render them viſible*; which it becomes their indiſpenſible Duty to do, when outward Impediments are not abſolutely inſuperable. But of theſe things thus far, ὡς ἐν παρόδῳ.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

What ſort of Churches the Diſciples of Chriſt, may, and ought to joyn themſelves unto as unto Entire Communion.

WE have proved before that it is the Duty of all individual Chriſtians, to give themſelves up unto the Conduct, Fellowſhip and Communion of ſome particular Church or Congregation. Our preſent Enquiry hereon is, that whereas there is a great Diverſity among profeſſing Societies in the World, concerning each whereof it is ſaid, *Lo here is Chriſt, and Lo there is Chriſt*, what Church, of what Conſtitution and Order, any one that takes care of his own Edification and Salvation, ought to joyn himſelf unto. This I ſhall ſpeak unto firſt in *General*, and then in the Examination of *one particular Caſe* or Inſtance, wherein many at this day are concerned. And ſome things muſt be premiſed unto the right ſtating of the Subject of our Enquiry.

1. The *Diverſities and Diviſions* among Churches which reſpect is to be had unto, in

in the choice of any which we will or ought to joyn unto; are of two ſorts.

(1.) Such as are *occaſioned* by the remaining Weakneſſes, Infirmities and Ignorance of the beſt of Men, whereby they know but in part, and Propheſie only in part wherein our *Edification* is concerned, but our *Salvation* not endangered.

(2.) Such as are in and about things *Fundamental* in Faith, Worſhip and Obedience; We ſhall ſpeak to both of them.

2. *All Chriſtians* were *Originally of one Mind* in all things needful unto Joynt-Communion, ſo as that there might be among them all, *Love without Diſſimulation.* Howbeit, there was great Variety, not only in the Meaſure of their apprehenſions of the Doctrines of Truth, but in ſome Doctrines themſelves, as about the continuance of the obſervations of the Law, or at leaſt of ſome of them; as alſo Oppoſitions from without unto the Truth, by *Hereticks* and *Apoſtates*; neither of which hindred the Church Communion of true Believers. But the Diverſity, Difference, and Diviſions that are now among Churches in the World, is the effect of the great Apoſtaſie which befel them all in the latter Ages, as unto the Spirit, Rule, and Practice of thoſe which were planted by the Apoſtles, and will not

not be healed, until that Apoſtaſie be Aboliſhed.

3. *Satan* having poſſeſſed himſelf of the *Advantage of theſe Diviſions*, whereof he was the Author, he makes uſe of them to act his Malice and Rage, in ſtirring up and inſtigating one Party to *Perſecute*, Oppreſs and Devour another, until the Life, Power and Glory of Chriſtian Religion is almoſt loſt in the World. It requires therefore great Wiſdom to depart our ſelves aright among theſe Diviſions, ſo as to contribute nothing unto the Ends of Malice deſigned by *Satan* in them.

4. In this ſtate of things until it may be cured, which it will never be, by any of the ways yet propoſed and inſiſted on; the Enquiry is concerning the Duty of any one who takes care of his own Soul, as unto a Conjunction with ſome Church or other. And on the *Negative Part* I ſay,

1. Such an one is bound *not to joyn* with any Church or Society where any *Fundamental* Article of Faith is rejected or corrupted. There may be a Fundamental Error in a true Chuch for a ſeaſon, when the Church erreth not Fundamentally; 1 *Cor.* 15. 2 *Tim.* 2. 18. But I ſuppoſe the Error in or againſt the Foundation, is *part of the Profeſſion* of the Church or Society to be joyned unto. For thereby the Nature

ture of the Church is deſtroyed; it *doth not hold the Head*, nor abide on the Foundation, nor is the Ground and Pillar of Truth. Wherefore although the *Socinians* under a Pretence of Love, Forbearance, and Mutual Toleration, do offer us the Communion of their Churches, wherein there is ſomewhat of Order and Diſcipline commendible; yet it is unlawful to joyn in Church Fellowſhip or Communion with them. For their Errors about the *Trinity*, *the Incarnation of Chriſt*, and his *Satisfaction*, are deſtructive of the Foundation of the Prophets and Apoſtles; and *Idolotry*, in the Divine Worſhip of a meer Creature, is introduced by them.

2. Where there is any Church taught or allowed, a *Mixture of Doctrines or Opinions, that are prejudicial unto Goſpel Holineſs or Obedience*, no man that takes due care of his Salvation can joyn himſelf unto it. For the *Original* Rule and Meaſure of all Church Communion, is agreement in the Doctrine of Truth. Where therefore there is either not a *ſtable Profeſſion* of the ſame Doctrine in all *ſubſtantial Truths* of the Goſpel, but an uncertain ſound is given, ſome ſaying one thing, ſome another; or that Oppoſition is made unto any Truths, of the Importance before mentioned; None can be bound or obliged to hold

hold Communion with it; nor can incur any blame by refraining from it. For it is the Duty of a Christian in all things, προτιμᾶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν; And to joyn with such a Church, would (1.) Stain their Profession, (2.) Hinder their Edification; (3.) Establish a new Rule of Communion unknown to the Scriptures; namely, besides Truth; as might easily be manifested.

3. Where the *Fundamentals of Religious Worship*, are corrupted or overthrown, it is absolutely unlawful to joyn unto, or abide in any Church. So is it with the *Church of* Rome. The various ways whereby the Foundations of Divine Religious Worship, are overthrown in that Church by Superstition and Idolatry, have been sufficiently declared. These render the Communion of that Church pernitious.

4. Nor can any Man be obliged to joyn himself with any Church, nor can it be his Duty so to do, where the Eternally fixed Rule and Measure of Religious Worship, namely, that it be of Divine Institution, is varied or change *by any Additions unto* it, or *Substractions* from it. For whereas one principal end of all Churches is the joynt celebration of Divine VVorship, if there be not a certain stable Rule thereof in any Church of Divine Prescription, no

Man

Man can be obliged unto Communion therewith.

5. Where the *Fundamentals of Church Order*, Practice and Diſcipline are deſtroyed, it is not lawful for any man to joyn in Church Communion. Theſe Fundamentals are of two ſorts; (1.) Such as concern the *Miniſtry of the Church*; (2.) Such as concern *the* Church *it ſelf*.

There are four things that are *neceſſary Fundamentals* unto the Order of the Church, on the part of the *Miniſtry*.

(1.) That all the Miniſters or Officers of it, be *duly choſen* by the Church it ſelf, and ſolemnly ſet apart in the Church unto their Office, according unto the Rule and Law of Chriſt. This is Fundamental unto Church Order, the Root of it, from whence all other parts of it do Spring. And it is that which is ῥητῶς, or expreſly provided for in the Scripture, as we ſhall ſee. If there be a neglect herein, and no other Relation required between *Miniſters*, *Elders*, *Rulers*, *Biſhops*, and the Church, but what is raiſed and created by Ways and Rules of mens appointment, or if there be a Temporary diſpoſal of Perſons into a diſcharge of that *Office*, without a ſolemn Call, Choice, Ordination, and Separation unto the Office it ſelf and its work, the Law of

Chriſt is violated, and the Order of the Church diſturbed in its Foundation.

(2.) That thoſe who are called unto the Office of the Miniſtry be *duly qualified*, by their Endowment with Spiritual Gifts for the diſcharge of their *Duty*, is Fundamental unto the Miniſtry; that the Lord Jeſus Chriſt doth ſtill continue his Diſpenſation of Spiritual Gifts unto Men, to fit and enable them unto the Office and work of the Miniſtry; that if he doth not do ſo, or ſhould at any time ceaſe ſo to do, the whole Office of the Miniſtry muſt ceaſe, and the Being of the Church with it, that it is altogether uſeleſs for any Churches or Perſons to erect an Image of the Goſpel Miniſtry by outward Rites and Ceremonies, without the enlivening form of theſe Spiritual Gifts, I have proved ſufficiently in my Diſcourſe *of Spiritual Gifts and their continuance in the Church.* Wherefore a Communication of Spiritual Gifts peculiarly enabling Men unto the Work of the Miniſtry, antecedent unto their ſolemn Separation unto the Office, in ſome good Meaſure, is abſolutely neceſſary unto the due continuance of the Office and its Work; See *Epheſ.* 4. 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15. To ſuppoſe that the Lord Chriſt doth call and appoint Men, unto a certain Office and Work

Work in his Church, ſecluding all others from any Intereſt in the one or other, and yet not endow them with peculiar *Gifts and Abilities* for the diſcharge of that Office and Work, is to aſcribe that unto him, which is every way unbecoming his Wiſdom and Grace, with his Love unto the Church. But when Men look on all Church Order, as a *lifeleſs Machine* to be acted moved and diſpoſed by External Rules, Laws, Canons and Orders, without reſpect unto the Actings of the Spirit of Chriſt going before in the Rule of his Word, to enliven every part of it, the true Diſciples of Chriſt will receive no advantage thereby.

(3.) It is of the ſame Importance that Perſons ſo called *do take heed unto their Miniſtry that they fulfil it*, that they give themſelves unto the VVord and Prayer, that they labour continually in the VVord and Doctrine, and all thoſe other Duties which in the Scripture are preſcribed unto them; and this not only as unto the Matter of them, but as unto the Manner of their performance with Zeal, Love, Compaſſion and Diligence. Where there is a *great Defect* in any of theſe things, on what Pretence ſoever it be; where Men eſteem themſelves exempted from this Work, or not obliged unto it; when

they ſuppoſe that they may diſcharge their Office at a cheaper rate, and with leſs trouble, as unto their preſent Intereſt, by ſuch ways as I ſhall not here expreſs, No Man is, no Man can be obliged to *confine* his Church Communion, unto ſuch a Miniſtry.

(4.) It is required that they be *Examples*, unto the Flock, in the Expreſſion of the Nature and Power of the Doctrine which they Preach, in their Converſation, eſpecially in Zeal, Humility, Self-denial, and readineſs for the Croſs.

Where theſe things are not, there is ſuch a defect in the *Fundamentals* of Church Practiſe, as unto the *Miniſtry* of it, that no Man who takes care of his own Edification, can joyn himſelf unto a Church, labouring under it. For Miniſters and Churches are nothing but inſtituted means of the Converſion of Sinners, and the Edification of Believers. And when any of them through their own default ceaſe ſo to be, there is no obligation unto any man to joyn or continue in their Communion; nor do they contract any Guilt in a peaceable departure from them, but diſcharge their Duty. That this be done *peaceably* without ſtrife or contention, without judging of others, as unto their Intereſt in Chriſt, and Eternal Salvation, the Law of

of Moral Obedience doth require. That it be done with Love and Compaſſion and Prayer towards, and for them who are left, is the peculiar Direction of that moral Duty by the Goſpel. Such a Practice at preſent would fall under ſevere charges and accuſations, as alſo brutiſh Penalties in ſome places. But when all *Church Craft* ſhall be defeated, and the uſes that are made of its imaginary Authority be diſcarded, there will be little occaſion of this Practiſe, and none at all of Offence.

Again; There are Things *Fundamental* unto Church Practiſe and Order in the *Church it ſelf*, which where they are neglected, no man ought of choice to joyn himſelf unto that Church, ſeeing he cannot do it without the Prejudice of his Edification, the furtherance whereof he ought to deſign in that Duty. And theſe are,

(1.) That the *Diſcipline of Chriſt* be duly exerciſed in it, according unto his mind, and by the Rules of his Preſcription. There never was any Sect, Order, or Society of men in the world, deſigned for the Preſervation and Promotion of Vertue and things Praiſe-worthy, but they had *Rules of Diſcipline* proper unto the Ends of their Deſign, to be obſerved in and by all that belong unto them. Where

the Erection of ſuch Societies is continued in the VVorld, as it is much in the *Papacy*, both their Conſtitution, and their Converſation, depend on the *eſpecial Rules of Diſcipline* which they have framed unto themſelves. And this is done by them in great Variety; for being ignorant of the *Diſcipline of the Goſpel*, and ſo eſteeming it inſufficient unto their Deſign, they have made no end of *Coyning Rules* unto themſelves. To ſuppoſe that our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who in this *Church-ſtate* according unto his infinite VViſdom, hath erected the moſt perfect Society for the moſt perfect Ends, of Religion, of Obedience towards God, of Love and Uſefulneſs among our ſelves, hath not appointed a *Diſcipline*, and *given Rules* concerning its Adminiſtration, for the Preſervation of that Society, and the attaining of thoſe Ends, is highly injurous unto his Honour and Glory.

VVhere therefore there is a *Church* or any Society that pretends ſo to be, wherein there is an *utter Neglect of this Diſcipline of Chriſt*, or the eſtabliſhment of another, not adminiſtred by the Laws and Rules that he preſcribed, no Diſciple of Chriſt can be obliged to joyn unto, or to continue in the Total ſole *Communion* of ſuch a Church. And whereas there are two Parts of this *Diſcipline of Chriſt*; That which

which is *Private*, among the *Members* of the *Church*, for the Exercise and Preservation of Love; and that which is *Publick*, in and by the Authority of the Rulers of the *Church*, for the Preservation of Purity and Order, a Neglect in either of them, doth much impeach the Fundamental *Constitution* of a *Church* as unto its Practise.

2. There are sundry other things which belong unto this *Discipline* in General, which are of great consideration in the Discharge of the Duty we enquire into. Among them are,

(1.) That constant *Difference* be put between the Good and the Bad in all *Church* Administrations;

(2.) That Persons *openly or flagitiously* wicked, be not admitted into the Society of the Church, or a participation of its Priviledges.

(3.) That *Holiness*, Love, and Usefulness, be openly avowed as the Design and interest of the *Church*. But they are all so comprized in the General Head of *Discipline*, as that I shall not in particular insist upon them.

From what hath been thus declared, it will appear on the other hand, *what Church* it is that a *Disciple of Christ. who takes due care of his own Edification and Salvation*,

Salvation, ought in duty to joyn himſelf unto in compleat Communion. To anſwer this Enquiry, is the end of all thoſe Diſcourſes and Controverſies which have been about the *Notes of the true Church*. I ſhall briefly determine concerning it, according to the Principles before Evinced.

1. IT muſt be ſuch a Church as wherein all the *Fundamental Truths* of the Goſpel are believed, owned, and profeſſed, without Controverſie, and thoſe not born withal by whom they are denied or oppoſed. Without this a Church is not *the Ground and Pillar of Truth*, it doth not hold the Head, it is not built on the foundation of the Prophets and Apoſtles. Neither is it ſufficient, that thoſe things are generally profeſſed or not denied. A Church that is filled with wranglings and contentions about *fundamental or important Truths* of the Goſpel, is not of choice to be joyned unto. For theſe things ſubvert the Souls of Men, and greatly impede their Edification. And although both among diſtinct Churches, and among the Members of the ſame Church, *mutual Forbearance* be to be exerciſed, with reſpect unto a variety in Apprehenſions in ſome Doctrines of leſſer Moment; Yet the Incurſion that hath been made into ſundry Proteſtant Churches

es in the laſt and preſent Age, of Novel Doctrines and Opinions, with Differences, Diviſions, and endleſs Diſputes which have enſued thereon, have rendered it very difficult to determine, how to engage in *compleat Communion* with them. For I do not judge, that any man is, or can be obliged unto conſtant total Communion with any Church, or to give up himſelf abſolutely unto the conduct thereof, wherein there are incurable diſſenſions about important Doctrines of the Goſpel. And if any Church, ſhall publickly avow, countenance, or approve of Doctrines contrary unto thoſe which were the Foundation of its firſt Communion, the Members of it are at Liberty, to refrain the Communion of it, and to provide otherwiſe for their own Edification.

2. IT muſt be ſuch a Church as wherein the *Divine Worſhip Inſtituted* or approved by Chriſt himſelf, is diligently obſerved, without any Addition made thereunto. In the Obſervation of this Worſhip as unto all external, occaſional Incidencies and Circumſtances of the Acts wherein it doth conſiſt, it is left unto the Prudence of the Church it ſelf, according to the Light of Nature, and general Rules of Scripture; and it muſt be ſo unleſs we ſhall ſuppoſe that the Lord

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Jeſus Chriſt, by making men his Diſciples, doth unmake them from being rational Creatures, or refuſeth the Exerciſe of the rational Faculties of our Souls in his ſervice. But this is ſo remote from Truth, that on the contrary, he gives them an improvement for this very end, that we may know how to deport our ſelves aright in the Obſervance of his Commands, as unto the outward diſcharge of them in his Worſhip and the Circumſtances of it. And this he doth by that Gift of *Spiritual Wiſdom*, whereof we ſhall treat afterwards.

But if Men, if Churches, will make *Additions* in or unto the Rites of religious Worſhip, unto what is appointed by Chriſt himſelf, and require their Obſervance in their Communion, on the force and efficacy of their being ſo by them appointed, no Diſciple of Chriſt is or can be obliged, by vertue of any Divine Inſtitution or Command, to joyn in *total, abſolute* Communion, with any ſuch Church. He may be induced on various conſiderations to judge, that ſomething of that Nature at ſome ſeaſon, may not be evil and ſinful unto him, which therefore he will bear with, or comply withal; yet he is not, he cannot be obliged by vertue of any Divine Rule or Command, to joyn him-

himſelf with, or continue in the Communion of ſuch a Church. If any ſhall ſuppoſe that hereby *too much Liberty* is granted unto Believers in the choice of their Communion, and ſhall thereon make ſevere Declamations, about the Inconveniences and Evils, which will enſue; I deſire they would remember the Principle I proceed upon, which is, that *Churches* are not ſuch *ſacred Machines* as ſome ſuppoſe, erected and acted for the outward Intereſt and Advantages of any ſort of men; but only means of the Edification of Believers, which they are bound to make uſe of, in Obedience unto the *Commands of Chriſt*, and no otherwiſe. Whereas therefore the Diſciples of Chriſt, have not only a Divine warranty juſtifying them in the doing of it, but an expreſs command making it their indiſpenſible Duty to joyn in the *Celebration* of all that Religious Worſhip, which the Lord Chriſt the only Law giver of the Church, and who was faithful both in and over the Houſe of God, as the Son, hath Inſtituted and commanded; but have no ſuch warranty or command for any thing elſe, it is their Duty to ſtand faſt in the Liberty wherewith Chriſt hath made them free. And if by the ſame breath, in the *ſame Rule*, Law or Canon,

Canon, they are commanded and obliged to obſerve in the Worſhip of God, what the Lord Chriſt hath appointed, and what he hath not appointed, both on the ſame Grounds, namely, the Authority of the Church, and on the ſame Penalties of their Omiſſion, no man can be divinely obliged to embrace the Communion of any Church on ſuch Terms.

3. IT is required that *the Miniſtry of a Church ſo to be joyned with*, is not defective in any of thoſe things which according to the Rule of the Goſpel are *fundamental* thereunto. What theſe are, hath been declared. And becauſe *Edification*, which is the end of Church Communion, doth ſo eminently depend on *the Miniſtry of the Church*, there is not any thing which we ought to have a more diligent conſideration of, in the joyning of our ſelves unto any ſuch Communion. And where the *Miniſtry* of any Church, be the Church of what ſort or ſize it will, is incurably Ignorant or Negligent, or thro' a defect in Gifts, Grace, or conſcientious attendance unto their Duty, is inſufficient unto the due Edification of the Souls of them that believe, no man can account himſelf obliged unto the Communion of the Church, but he that can be ſatisfied with a *Shadow* and the Names of things,

for

for the *Subſtance* and Reality of them.

If therefore it be granted, as I think it is, that *Edification* is the principal End of all Church Communion, it is not intelligible how a Man ſhould be obliged unto that Communion, and that alone, wherein *due Edification* cannot be obtained. Wherefore, a Miniſtry *enabled* by Spiritual Gifts, and *ingaged* by ſenſe of Duty to labour conſtantly in the uſe of all means appointed by Chriſt for the Edification of the Church, or increaſe of his Myſtical Body, is required in ſuch a Church, as a Believer may conſcientiouſly joyn himſelf unto. And where it is otherwiſe, let Men cry out *Schiſm* and *Faction* whilſt they pleaſe, Jeſus Chriſt will acquit his Diſciples, in the Exerciſe of their Liberty, and accept them in the Diſcharge of their Duty.

If it be ſaid, that if all Men be thus allowed to judge of what is *beſt for their own Edification*, and to act according unto the Judgment which they make, they will be *continually parting from on Church unto another*, untill all things are filled with diſturbance and Confuſion; I ſay,

(1.) That the contrary Aſſertion, namely, that Men *are not allowed* to judge what is meet and beſt for their own Edification, or not to act according to the Judg-

ment they make herein, may poſſible *keep up ſome Churches*, but is the ready way to *deſtroy all Religion*.

(2.) That many of thoſe by whom this Liberty is denyed unto profeſſing Chriſtians, yet do indeed take it for granted, that they *have ſuch a Liberty*, and that it is their Duty to make uſe of it. For what are all the Conteſts between the *Church of* Rome, *and the Church of* England, ſo far as Chriſtians, that are not Church-men, are concerned in them? Is it not, in whether of theſe Churches *Edification* may be beſt obtained? If this be not the Ball between us, I know not what is. Now herein do all the Writers and Preachers of both Parties give *their Reaſons* and Arguments unto the People, why *Edification* is better to be had in the one Church than in the other? And do they not require of them to form a Judgment upon thoſe Reaſons and Arguments, and to act accordingly; if they do not, they do but make a Fouriſh, and act a Part, like *Players on a ſtage*, without any determinate deſign.

(3.) All Chriſtians *actually do ſo*; they do judge for themſelves, unleſs they are bruriſh; they do Act according unto that Judgment unleſs they are hardened in Sin; and therefore who do not ſo, are not to be eſteemed Diſciples of Chriſt. To

ſuppoſe

ſuppoſe that in all things of *Spiritual* and Eternal Concernment, that men are not determined and acted, every one by his own Judgment, is an Imagination of men who think but little of what they are, or do, or ſay, or write. Even thoſe who ſhut their Eyes againſt the Light, and follow in the Herd, reſolving not to enquire into any of theſe things, do it, becauſe they *judge it is beſt for them ſo to do.*

(4.) It is commonly acknowledged by *Proteſtants*, that private Chriſtians have a *Judgment of Diſcretion* in things of Religion. The Term was invented to grant them ſome Liberty of Judgment in Oppoſition unto the blind Obedience required by the *Church of* Rome; but withal to put a *reſtraint* upon it, and a diſtinction of ſome Superiour Judgment, it may be, in the Church or others. But if by *Diſcretion*, they mean *the beſt of Mens Underſtanding*, Knowledge, Wiſdom, and Prudence, in and about the things wherein it is exerciſed, I ſhould be glad to be informed, what *other Judgment*, than this of *Diſcretion* in and about the things of Religion, this or that or any Church in the World, can have or exerciſe. But to allow Men a Judgment of Diſcretion, and not to grant it their Duty to act according unto that Judgment, is to oblige

them to be *Fools*, and to act, *not diſcreetly*, at leaſt not according unto *their own Diſcretion*.

5. The ſame is to be ſpoken of *Goſpel Diſcipline*, without which neither can the Duties of Church Societies be obſerved, nor the ends of them attained. The neglect, the loſs, the abuſe hereof, is that which hath ruined the Glory of Chriſtian Religion in the World, and brought the whole Profeſſion of it into Confuſion. Hereon have the fervency and ſincerity of true *Evangelical* mutual Love been abated, yea, utterly loſt. For that Love which Jeſus Chriſt requireth among his Diſciples, is ſuch as never was in the World before amongſt men, nor can be in the World, but on the Principles of the Goſpel, and Faith therein. Therefore it is called his *New Commandement*. The Continuation of it amongſt the Generality of Chriſtians is but vainly pretended; little or nothing of the Reality of it in its due Exerciſe is found. And this hath enſued on the Neglect of *Evangelical Diſcipline* in Churches, or the turning of it into a Worldly Domination. For one principal End of it, is the Preſervation, Guidance, and acting of this Love. That *mutual Watch* over one another that ought to be in all the Members of the Church, the

the Principal Evidence and Fruit of Love without Diſſimulation, is alſo loſt hereby. Moſt Men are rather ready to ſay in the Spirit and Words of *Cain*, *Am I my Brothers Keeper*, than to attend unto the Command of the Apoſtles. *Exhort one another daily, leaſt any be hardened through the Deceitfulneſs of Sin*; or comply with the Command of our Saviour, *if thy Brother offend thee, tell him of it between him and thee*. By this means likewiſe is the Purity of Communion loſt, and thoſe received principal Members of Churches, who by all the Rules of *Primitive Diſcipline*, ought to be caſt out of them. Wherefore this alſo is to be conſidered in the Choice we are to make of what Churches we will joyn our ſelves unto, as unto *conſtant compleat Communion*, and in whoſe Communion we will abide. For theſe things are matters of Choice, and conſiſt in Voluntary free Acts of Obedience. With thoſe unto whom they are not ſo, who would on the one hand have them to be things that Men may be compelled unto, and ought ſo to be; or on the other, that follow no other Guidance in them but outward Circumſtances from the Times and Places where they are born and inhabit, I will have no Conteſt. It follows from hence alſo, That,

Where there are *many Churches* wherein theſe things are found, whereon we may lawfully and ought in Duty to joyn with ſome of them, in particular, every one is obliged to joyn himſelf unto ſuch a Church, as whoſe Principles and Practiſes are moſt ſuited unto his Edification.

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